

"BY THEIR FRUITS."

What credentials does the new theology furnish to commend it to public confidence? It has been prominent under its present title for more than a quarter of a century. So that the "New" is really getting somewhat time-worn. There has at least been opportunity for establishing a claim to the confidence of honest inquirers after truth. What tangible benefaction has it bestowed on mankind? Does it offer anything to match the miracle of modern missions? What names does it set over against those of Carey, Judson, Morrison, Duff, Moffet, Williams, Livingston, Paton, Hannington, Mackay and others that have been glorified, or the heroes of the faith now in the foreign field? We read of John Howard who at peril and sacrifice reformed the horrible prison system of Britain and the Continent; and the compassionate labors of Florence Nightingale and Clara Baston, but these all were devotees of the "old" theology, not the "new". What self-oblations for humanity's sake is liberalism making? Are there any men among these scorners of traditionalism that are arousing and reforming great cities as Chalmers did, or great nations as Knox did? Are there any names like Moody or Torrey or Chapman or Gipsy Smith among them? Not one. It is time that this boasted religion of development was developing some specimens of genuine leadership in the world's progress. Why is it that advanced thought has no representatives in the forefront of the advance of the Kingdom of light upon the Kingdom of darkness? Let us have a roll call of their leaders in the great temperance movements of the day. Have they any names corresponding to those of John B. Gough, or Frances Murphy or Frances E. Willard? Are they working in the slums for the uplift of the submerged masses. No Jerry McAulays to rise up and call them blessed. They are "higher critics," but they do not lift the burdens of humanity with one of their fingers. Or if they do, they are far more quiet about it than they are in trumpeting their crude and conflicting negations of Bible history. They tell us that Biblical standards of morals are defective, but what are they doing to elevate the moral standards of present day life among the masses?

This school of prophets furnishes an army of book-makers. They are even in evidence in current magazine literature. They exhibit a peculiar fondness for notoriety and university chairs; especially if the chairs are liberally endowed, but they are scrupulously shy of martyrdom and it is not recorded that any one of them was ever awarded a hero medal.

It is time now for scholarship and religion and civilization itself to take a stand and say to these gentlemen, "You must prove your title to existence by doing something more than selling queer books and holding down university chairs. You claim that no scholar now holds to the old ideas about inspiration and atonement. Very well; you monopolize the world's scholarship, now apply it to the betterment of human life." This is an age of social, civic and economic reforms. It is time that you most modern thinkers were becoming renowned in the giving of either your money, or time or your precious selves to making the world really better, or it is time for your getting out of the way of the world's progress.

A SINNER IN SORROW.

We are in receipt of a touching letter. As the writer of these lines is in utter ignorance of the name or locality of its writer, and as we feel sure that it represents the feelings of a multitude of other men, we print a large extract from it.

Dear Sir: I am deeply concerned about my spiritual life and I can not get comfort. I write to ask if you will please give me some encouragement or comfort, through the columns of your paper which I read with eagerness each week.

I joined the church early in life; but in prosperity and youth and gayety I wandered from the house of my God. For a while I lived among the gay and thoughtless throng. What I then thought was pleasure, I now know to be sorrow. I became worldly, thinking I would have pleasure while young and live a better life in old age. But one thing led to another. Now I am old; in deep affliction, bereft of loved ones, with few comforts, with loss of property, almost destitute. I want comfort. I realize my awful condition. I feel the need of religion. I pray much and often, but do not get the comfort I need. I fear that God is still angry with me. I am so miserable, so sorry for my wrong life. Is there any hope for me?

A Sinner in Sorrow.

1. When Dr. Archibald Alexander was at the head of Princeton Theological Seminary, he found a student for the ministry under great distress because he feared that he had never been converted. The doctor heard him calmly and then replied, that the important question is not whether your former conversion was genuine, but rather whether you are now penitent. You know how to kneel and confess your sin before God and how to trust in Jesus Christ. Do it now. The Doctor's reply was simply right.

A similar answer would we give to this inquirer. His former experiences may or may not have measured up to the standard of true piety. The answer of the Lord is not concerning yesterday, but, "Today if ye will hear his voice." Today "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The first thing for this inquirer to do, and we hope that he has done it, is to cry like the publican in the temple, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And then he shall go down to his house justified.

2. But suppose that he has done this, and yet fails to find in his soul the comfort that he expects and desires. What then can be said?

We would refer him to the experience of David. David sinned, and continued indifferent to his sin for months, until the time when his child was born. Then the prophet, Nathan; awaked him to a consciousness of his sin. David repented. He cried, "I have sinned against Jehovah." It was true penitence and the Lord accepted it as such, for Nathan replied, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13). He came to the Lord, and he was not cast out. He was pardoned and saved.

But Nathan told him two other things. One was that because David had brought reproach upon God, therefore the child should die. And the child did die. For a week, day after day, David fasted and pleaded; but God let the child die. It was part of the discipline that was needed for David's own sake and for the sake of the nation. God pardons. He takes us out of the relation of servants who are subject to punishment, and puts us into the relation of sons, who may